

The Tribune Institute

Housekeeping as a Profession

THE SUCCULENT OYSTER—HIS FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

Why the Modern Epicure Has Sometimes a Fellow Feeling with R. Crusoe Regarding the Wiles of That Siren of Shellfish—the Oyster.

By ANNE LEWIS PIERCE.

Director of the Tribune Institute.

W ALL remember the breathless anxiety with which we waited to see whether Robinson Crusoe would die of hunger or risk eating the strange shellfish that strewed the shore. Many a man to-day would gladly take a chance of death rather than forego the delights of eating oysters. But happily, due to Federal and state laws, the risks from oyster eating are steadily on the decline.

The oyster has been abused in several ways—and it is not constructed to stand abuse. Like all protein foods, when not treated properly it wreaks a dire vengeance on the consumer. When the hue and cry was first raised concerning the dangers from typhoid-bearing oysters, grown in waters infested with sewage, the oyster men, like other food producers before them, thought that they were about to be ruined by the wild-eyed reformers, and that the conditions could not be changed. "It isn't practical," the old stumbling block in the path of all reforms, was promptly trotted out.

DR. WILEY AND THE OYSTER MAN. Not long ago, however, the big genial man who started this and many similar brands of trouble (?) was peacefully buying his ticket at a small station in Connecticut, when he was asked by a total stranger:

"Are you Dr. Wiley?" The Big Man admitted it, wondering mildly whether Patent Medicines, Rectified Whiskey, Glucose or Food Preservatives were about to enter a protest.

"Well," said the stranger, "I owe you an apology. When you started this oyster business I thought you were a regular devil with horns. I was president of a state oyster association, and I thought you were going to ruin

the industry. I want to tell you now that you have done more for the oyster industry than any man in the country. We have got a better product than we ever had, and the improved methods of packing and transportation have opened up markets we never hoped to reach. I repeat, I owe you an apology."

It is always the way. A better product is as much the gain of the dealer as it is of the consumer—their interests are one. But the battle against the "stand-patter" must be fought and the discomforts of the period of change endured before the profits can be enjoyed.

WHAT STARTED THE MISCHIEF. When the oyster man brought in his oysters from the salty deep and put them to "drink" or "float" in nearby fresh water, often contaminated with refuse from human dwellings, he did not know that the oyster was giving up mineral ingredients and flavor and absorbing fresh water and typhoid germs.

Being dumb, the oyster couldn't mention it, and nobody else knew or cared. But after a few epidemics, traced by careful scientific detective work to oysters taken from waters infected with sewage, and the identification of the colon bacillus in the waters and oysters themselves—showing the presence of human excreta and the danger of typhoid—food inspection decisions and sanitary surveys came to the rescue, and the constructive work of protection supplemented the destructive work of condemnation and prosecution, as it always must.

The sad story of the Goshen epidemic is not likely to be repeated under present conditions of inspection. A banquet held early in October of 1911 at Goshen, N. Y., was followed by seventeen cases of typhoid and eighty-three of gastro-enteritis, traced beyond reasonable doubt to the Jamaica Bay oysters served. Of the 127 guests who ate oysters 17 per cent had typhoid and 65 per cent had diarrhoea.

Too high a price to pay, even for oysters on the half-shell.

GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

A few authentic cases of this kind gave a stimulus to the proper control of the oyster beds, and sanitary surveys have become deservedly popular. The taking of oysters from these beds in Jamaica Bay from April 1 to December 1 of this year has been forbidden, and the oysters are to be given a chance to purify themselves in waters known to be free from pollution.

Just how long this cleansing process takes



The Dire Dilemma of Poor Old Robinson Crusoe.

is not known definitely, possibly six weeks will be effective, but a whole season is safe beyond doubt.

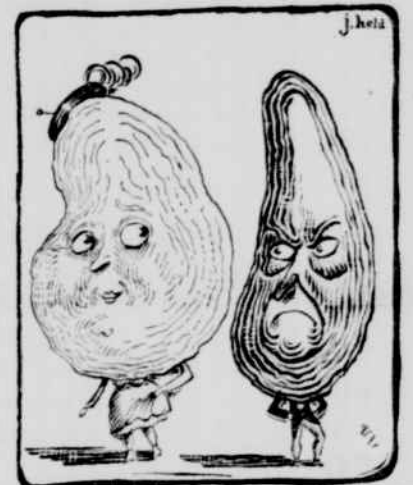
Adding calcium hypochlorite to the water for the artificial purification of oysters is advocated by the United States Public Health Service, and small amounts—affecting the flavor in no way—result in practically complete purification in twenty-four hours' time. The work, however, is only in its experimental stages.

COOKING DOES NO GOOD.

In cooking tests on polluted oysters it appeared that even live steam did not kill more than half of the bacteria in two minutes, and *B. coli*, which would carry with them the threat of typhoid, required ten or fifteen minutes of boiling to discourage their activities completely.

Since an oyster boiled for ten minutes would be about as appetizing as a rubber heel, it is plain that the source of the oyster, its cleanliness and the subsequent handling are topics for careful investigation by the housewife. You can't depend on the average cooking to undo the harm if any has been done.

There is no harm in "floating" the oysters in



"Beware the Plump Anaemic Oyster—This Time It Is the Dark, Lean, Cassius-like Individual That Is Not to be Feared."

the shell in pure water of the same salt content as that in which they are grown; but when put in fresher water, either before or after shucking, the oyster is merely "bloated" with

Much More Delicious, and Decidedly Safer, Now That Uncle Sam Has Taken a Hand at Cleaning Its House and Reforming Its Manners.

water, its flavor is decreased and it is less delicious if not actually dangerous.

Beware the plump, anaemic oyster—this time it is the dark, lean, Cassius-like individual that is not to be feared! "Washing" for more than thirty minutes is deemed undesirable. Watch your retailer on this point.

Having escaped these dangers, there remained for the unhappy oysters the probability of hours of travel in contact with melting ice; but this condition also has passed to a great extent. Oysters are shucked, placed in containers and surrounded with ice, so that they may be kept cool without being adulterated with water.

GOOD FOOD, BUT EXPENSIVE.

These considerations happily disposed of—and incidentally it is just as well to give the oyster the month of October to get rid of any possible pollution acquired during the summer months—we can turn to the food value of the bivalve with relief.

What right has the oyster to our dietetic affections—besides the fact that it tastes good? Though, to tell the truth, that is not a frivolous reason—to make bread and milk savory is no negligible function, for people who turn with disgust from hot milk—and there is no better food—will eagerly welcome an oyster stew.

Economy is not one of the oyster's virtues. Let's dispose of that idea first. They are expensive, unless used in small quantities for flavoring.

But they offer a very easily digestible, readily available source of tissue-building food: they contain the same percentage of water as milk, but cost five times as much, even when the cheapest, smallest, 30-cents-a-quart oyster is used.

If you want to buy your tissue-building food at \$5 a pound get it as select oysters at 60 cents a quart; even at 30 cents a quart your protein from this delectable source costs \$2.50 a pound, as compared with wheat protein at 26 cents, steak at \$1.52 and milk at \$1.06 (7 cents a quart).

The statement that a quart of oysters and a quart of milk have the same amount of nourishment should be followed by the warning that the oysters cost nearly five times as much.

The panned oyster, well buttered and reposing on toast, is logical as well as delicious—for fat and carbohydrates are low in the oyster and need supplementing; the proteins and

mineral ingredients constitute the oyster's chief claim to recognition as food.

When it comes to considering the nature of the minerals milk again wins, because the leading minerals in the oyster are the acid-forming elements, chlorine and sulphur and phosphorus; while the milk rejoices in unusual quantities of lime and has, therefore, a most healthful tendency in maintaining the alkalinity of the blood.

A good oyster stew, with graham bread and butter and an apple, is a good, savory, well-balanced luncheon for any one, and the man who doesn't relish it should consult a doctor—there is something wrong with him. For an invalid, or those of delicate digestion, the fact that the stomach digestion of the oyster is completed within two or three hours is decidedly in its favor.

OYSTER SUPPLY IS WELL GUARDED.

It is good to know that Uncle Sam and his lieutenants in the states are guarding the oyster supply; that oyster men and scientists are looking out for the transplanting of the baby oyster to safe and cleanly places in which it may make its growth with profit to all concerned; and that throughout its three to five years of life the oyster's welfare is being more and more carefully protected.

The oyster should cheapen in price with intelligent and systematic methods of cultivation, and indeed it is one of the few foods that has not gone up much in price recently.

It gives a most appetizing and nutritious variety to the menu in the winter months; all agree in placing it among the most easily digested forms of protein. With 6 per cent of tissue-building material, double the amount found in milk, and its appetizing and digestible qualities, the oyster is a food to be respected, and the oyster supply, in a time of soaring meat prices, is a food source to be most carefully cultivated and safeguarded.

The Rainy-Day Closet

By MARGARET J. PETERSON.

IT is almost time to start laying away materials for the "rainy day closet"—a device intended for the alleviation of the care of mothers. Interest will soon centre in school playthings will be tossed aside for the more serious business of life, but they should not be tossed so far that they cannot be found again in case of need.

Into this rainy day closet should go the toys from which the interest has temporarily departed, together with the accumulation of summer magazines, from which pictures may be cut and pasted in scrapbooks. The covers, not only of standard magazines, but of advertising circulars and folders, are well worth preserving. Resort and travel folders gave many hours of pleasure last winter to a little sick boy. He cut out all the illustrations and pasted them in succession, going on a delightful pleasure tour of his very own to the Land of Make-Believe.

Specimens of rock and shells, pressed flowers brought from the mountains, seashore or country place, and many similar mementos and childish treasures should find their way into this closet, for their possibilities are endless.

This nook should contain story books for children of all ages, riddle books, old picture postals, clever advertising cards—in fact, all sorts of fascinating "junk" that is valueless to grown-ups, but dear to the heart of childhood. Furniture and seed catalogues appeal particularly to little people, and mismatched decks of cards are great time absorbers.

A few good new games should be among the collection of this wonderful room. Rolls of colored crepe paper and a supply of paper napkins cost almost nothing, and with the assistance of pins they will make the grandest kind of fancy costumes. With such an equipment all kinds of impromptu dramatic performances are possible. Paper for making flowers, clay for moulding, bits of pretty wall paper for covering boxes and all good medium sized boxes should be kept in this treasure house.

Envelopes from which the stamps are to be cut will afford some boy amusement. All the odds and ends of lead pencils and crayons can go into the closet and some day find a use. There are sure to be "shut in" days, many of them, when all of this apparent trash will find a happy welcome.

In families where the rainy day closet has become an institution the room is kept carefully locked, so that its opening on bad days or sick days is looked upon as an event of great importance. The articles are carefully arranged on the shelves or in drawers, and an older sister, or possibly the indispensable "old maid aunt"—for such there still be—is appointed custodian. Among the rules and regulations pasted on the inside of the door is one to the effect that no one must ask for a new article to play with inside a half hour, though playthings may be amicably interchanged among the groups of little folks who have been cut off by the weather from their customary amusements.

IF YOU WANT DELICIOUS OYSTERS—TRY THESE

By VIRGINIA CARTER LEE.

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WITH the coming of the fall months we turn with a new appetite to the savory oyster, which is essentially a cold weather dish and which lends itself to an infinite variety of savory luncheon and supper dishes. There is really nothing unwholesome about oysters during the summer season, but they spawn during that period, and, naturally, they are poor in flavor and not at their best. Undoubtedly the most digestible form of these delicious shellfish is to serve them raw, for they are most indigestible when poorly cooked, and by this method turned into puke, leathery balls. Thus the goodness of the oyster, both from a dietetic as well as an epicurean standpoint, consists in taking it from the fire at just the proper moment, namely, when the delicate edges begin to curl.

Oysters contain an albuminous substance which increases in hardness with an increase in temperature, just as the albumen of an egg does; therefore, it should be borne in mind that from 100 to 180 degrees Fahrenheit is the proper cooking of albumen. Oysters sent home in bulk (by the pint or quart) should be carefully looked over for any particles of shell, and it must be remembered in making oyster soup or stewed oysters that the milk should not be heated with the oysters, but only combined with the oysters and liquor just previous to serving; also that the oyster liquor must be skimmed carefully, as otherwise an unappetizing, dark colored scum will mar the appearance of the dish.

Following are some rather novel recipes for the preparation of these shellfish to the best advantage:

SOUTHERN OYSTER SOUP.

Scald two cups of milk in the upper part of the double boiler. Melt four tablespoons of butter, blend in three tablespoons of flour, pour on gradually the hot milk and add three or four drops of onion juice and a bit of ground mace. Return to the boiler and stir constantly until thick and smooth. Cook for six minutes. Heat one pint of oysters in their own liquor, skimming carefully. Do not boil, and as soon as the edges of the oysters begin to curl combine with the milk mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Beat in three tablespoons of hot cream and serve immediately.

PANNED OYSTERS.

Take one pint of oysters and drain thoroughly. Put two tablespoons of butter in the upper part of the double boiler and when hot but not brown add the oysters. Stir constantly, and as

soon as the edges begin to curl add one gill (half a cupful) of cream with salt, celery salt and paprika to taste. Stir until the cream begins to bubble and serve on buttered toast strips.

OYSTER MAYONNAISE.

This is a delicious salad for a late supper party. Scald twenty oysters in their own liquor and remove them when well plumped and the instant there is the faintest suggestion of the edges curling; then drain, cool and dry. Chill in the ice box, mix with an equal quantity of shredded crisp lettuce, add one minced cucumber pickle (large) and moisten with a highly seasoned mayonnaise dressing. Heap in a salad bowl that has been lined with white lettuce leaves. Garnish with slices of boned anchovies and sliced stuffed olives.

SCALLOPED OYSTERS.

To have this dish the success it should be the maker must be generous with the butter and be sure that it is not overcooked. Drain one pint of oysters, dry and dip in cracker crumbs that have been seasoned with salt and pepper. Take one cupful of cracker crumbs and mix with half the quantity of melted butter. Butter a shallow baking dish and fill with alternate layers of the crumbs on top, dot over with bits of butter, pour over carefully two tablespoons of the oyster liquor mixed with one tablespoonful of cream and bake about twenty-five minutes in a moderately hot oven. (The oysters are so well protected with the crumbs that they should not be toughened in this length of time if the oven is just right.)

NEW ENGLAND OYSTER ROAST.

Drain the liquor from one pint of oysters and heat in a saucepan. Skim well and season with a quarter of a teaspoonful of salt, a pinch of paprika and two teaspoonfuls of butter. Toast eight square soda crackers and lay in a large enameled baking dish, moistening them with the hot seasoned oyster juice. Lay three drained oysters upon each cracker, dot with bits of butter, sprinkle with a very little pepper and add three or four drops of lemon juice for each three of the shellfish. Set in a hot oven for about eight minutes, or until the oysters are steaming hot and the edges slightly curled. Remove from the fire, sprinkle with a little chopped parsley and serve with slices of lemon.

MARYLAND FRIED OYSTERS.

Select the largest and finest oysters for frying, then drain and dry each one thoroughly and carefully in a soft cloth. (This is most essential.)

Have in readiness rolled cracker crumbs that have been seasoned with salt and pepper, dip the shellfish in beaten egg, then roll in the crumbs, and after all have been so treated roll again in the crumbs. Lay about eight at a time in a frying basket and cook in deep, hot fat to a rich dark brown. Drain for a moment on brown paper and serve garnished with lemon points that have been sprinkled with parsley. A chilled cabbage salad is an excellent accompaniment.

BROWN FRICASSEE OF OYSTERS.

Heat one pint of oysters in their own liquor until the edges curl and the shellfish grow plump. Then drain off the liquor, skim and set aside to use later in the sauce. Brown one-fourth of a cupful of butter, add one-quarter of a cupful (scant) of browned flour and stir until smooth. Next add very gradually the oyster liquor, pepper and salt to taste, half a cupful of cream, one teaspoonful of Worcestershire sauce. Stir constantly until the sauce boils. Last of all, put in the oysters, add a tablespoonful of minced parsley and serve on rounds of hot toast as soon as the oysters are heated through.

BAKED OYSTER PIE.

For the crust sift together two cupfuls of flour, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder and half a teaspoonful of salt; then rub in with the finger tips one heaping tablespoonful of shortening and moisten with enough cold, sweet milk to form a dough. Divide into two parts. Roll out into two thin sheets and use one for lining a deep buttered baking dish. Dust the bottom of the dough with one tablespoonful of flour, lay in about fifteen or sixteen oysters that have been drained, cover with a layer of sliced boiled potatoes, sprinkle with pepper and salt, dot with bits of butter, cover over with the same number of oysters used in the bottom of the dish, and finish with one tablespoonful of minced bacon that has been slightly fried. Pour over half a cupful of cream, lay the remainder of the crust over the top, crimp the edges together with that of the undercrust, make several incisions for the steam to escape, and after brushing over with a little cold milk bake in a moderately hot oven for thirty minutes. Serve in the baking dish.

OYSTERS A LA POULET.

These may be served either on hot toast, in patty shells or small timbale cases. Heat the oysters in their own liquor until they are plump and the edges delicately curled. Allow for each pint of the shell fish the following sauce: Melt one tablespoonful of butter and a half of butter, blend in one tablespoonful of flour, and add grad-

ually one cupful of cream and half a cupful of the oyster liquor. Stir until the sauce is perfectly smooth, season with salt, white pepper to taste and two tablespoonfuls of chopped parsley, then put in the drained oysters and serve as soon as they are heated through. The oysters should never be added raw to the sauce, as in cooking the liquor that comes from them makes it too watery. If preferred, a little lemon juice may be used and an egg beaten into the cream just before it is removed from the fire.

OYSTER SANDWICHES.

These are another delicacy suited to the late supper party. Select large oysters, drain and dry carefully. Meanwhile soften some butter and season some cracker crumbs with salt and pepper. Then, holding each oyster on a fork, dip it into the crumbs, then into the melted butter, and again into the crumbs. Arrange them in an oyster broiler (which differs from an ordinary broiler by having the wires closer together) and broil over a hot fire for about two minutes, turning every few seconds. They should not be shriveled, but plump, soft, juicy and tender. Use as a filling between buttered slices of crisp toast and dress before putting the sandwiches together with a little tartare sauce.

OYSTER COCKTAILS.

These should be served in small cocktail glasses, the shell fish should be thoroughly chilled after being freshly opened, and five small oysters allowed for each portion. The individual rule for the dressing is as follows: Two tablespoonfuls of tomato catsup, one drop of Tabasco sauce, half a teaspoonful of grated horseradish, half a teaspoonful of lemon juice and a quarter of a teaspoonful of Worcestershire sauce. Mix well, pour over the shell fish and stand on ice until served.

PICKLED OYSTERS.

Drain and rinse one gallon of large oysters. Put one pint of oyster juice and one pint of strong vinegar over the fire in a large enameled saucepan. Scald and skim until clear. Add half a tablespoonful of whole pepper, half a tablespoonful each of cloves, mace and salt, and a broken stick of cinnamon. Cook for about two minutes after the spice is added, then put in the oysters and cook until the edges begin to curl. The oysters should be pickled if possible the day before serving, as standing in the vinegar is apt to toughen them. Keep over night in a stone crock or earthenware vessel.

QUICK CURRY OF OYSTERS.

Drain twenty-five oysters. Have at hand a clove of garlic and a tablespoonful of chopped green pepper (freed from seeds). Put into the upper part of the chafing dish two tablespoonfuls of butter, and when hot, but not brown, add the oysters. Sprinkle over one teaspoonful of curry powder, the minced pepper and a pinch of salt. Rub the spoon with the garlic and stir until the edges of the oysters are well curled. Serve very hot on toast squares.

Economizing Space

By M. B. BROOKS.

WHEN two persons are compelled to share a single room dissatisfaction generally prevails. But not long ago I visited a home in which this problem was admirably solved.

In the largest chamber of the house two closets had been built on opposite sides of the room intended for two occupants. This was excellent, so far as it went, but the dominating feature of the arrangement was a double dresser affair made of two plain enameled chests of drawers, a broad board and a long mirror. The board was bracketed to the wall like a shelf, about half way up between the two chests, and the mirror hung just above it. This gave a very good looking as well as a very convenient dressing table, in which the belongings of each occupant might be kept separate.

As the house was without a bath, two small, expensive washstands of white enamel were placed in opposite corners. Twin beds also were installed, so there was no excuse for friction between the two boys who occupied the room.

This idea is also very good in small houses, where the guest room is an impossibility.

AN IMPROVED DESK.

In the room just mentioned there was no space for private desks, so one drawer in each of the chests had been set aside for this purpose. In these were stored stationery, pen and ink, etc. When in use the drawer was pulled out far enough to permit a thin board, neatly covered with blotting paper, to be laid across it. Upon this improvised desk any writing could be done with ease. In order that the boards might always be at hand they were hung on the wall besides the chests. A picture was pasted to one side of each board furnished the excuse for such ornamental use.

To hold their books, two orange cases covered with burlap inside and out were nailed lengthwise together and hung on the wall, giving each boy two shelves of his own.

WHERE THEY PUT THE SEWING MACHINE.

I know two young women who have taken a room together in a boarding house. Each one is in the habit of doing much of her own sewing, so a machine was a necessity. But where to put it was a question. They finally hit upon the novel plan of doing away altogether with the regular dressing table and substituting a shelf under whose curtains recesses the machine might be kept when not in use. The shelf was covered with cretonne to match the curtain and a piece of glass laid over it. A large hors d'oeuvre dish, divided into shallow compartments, made an ideal container for all the dressing table appointments instead of having them scattered over the top, so that the shelf might be instantly cleared and used for a cutting or work table.

Each girl kept her sewing outfit in a discolored suitcase fitted out with convenient pockets and bands that made neatness a pleasure. To add further to their working space, the bedside table was abolished, and in its place appeared a small bracket which fastens to the